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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7447

INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1091

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4638

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8179

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5740

RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1530

RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1493

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000301

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/29/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: BURMA: NLD STRUGGLES TO MONITOR THE REFERENDUM

REF: RANGOON 284

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Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The NLD is struggling to organize volunteers to monitor polling for the regime's May 10 constitutional referendum. Each NLD Division chair is responsible for organizing observers for his/her own division, but we detected little coordination among them. The NLD's lead organizer for Rangoon Division could provide only a vague description of how his monitoring effort would be organized and admitted he was having difficulty raising funds for mobile phones so his volunteers could report their observations to NLD headquarters. He gratefully accepted Embassy Rangoon's offer to include NLD volunteers in the election monitor training we will host before May 10. End summary.

¶2. (C) Embassy officers met with Aye Tun, NLD leader from Yankin Township, who is one of the key organizers of the NLD's project to monitor voting during the May 10 constitutional referendum. Aye Tun is responsible for overseeing the monitoring in Rangoon Division, which he has organized into seven geographical regions for monitoring purposes. Though he could give us no concrete numbers, Aye Tun claimed he had organized a number of NLD Youth and party supporters and sympathizers, who would observe voting precincts throughout Rangoon division. Aye Tun said that on May 10, these observers would report to NLD headquarters the voting processes they observe and any irregularities that they see.

¶3. (C) While Aye Tun said the NLD hoped to obtain vote tallies from each precinct, he could not explain how this would be done. While the NLD aims to have a representative among the ten persons the referendum law states would be allowed to observe the vote counting, they expressed concern that the regime's announcement that only the last ten voters would be allowed to observe the vote counting might prevent them from doing so. Aye Tun also admitted that the local authorities were unlikely to permit anyone remotely associated with the NLD to observe the vote counting. As a

last resort, Aye Tun continued, the NLD would obtain vote tallies from local officials, although he could not explain where, how, or from whom this would be done.

¶4. (C) Aye Tun said that NLD observers would also try to conduct informal exit polling, but noted this would have to be done well-clear of the precincts. He acknowledged that many voters would be nervous to speak to someone they did not know regarding how they had voted. Aye Tun planned on renting eight mobile phones for his observer teams, but has only raised enough funds to rent four. The NLD would not accept money from foreign governments or exile organizations, Aye Tun emphasized, only donations from NLD members could be used.

¶5. (C) Aye Tun told us that other NLD Division Chiefs are responsible for the election monitoring in their own divisions, adding that there was little coordination among them. He did not know what any other NLD organizers were planning on May 10, he only knew that all information would be called into NLD headquarters for examination by the NLD Central Executive Committee (CEC) and released to the outside media. Aye Tun said the NLD would compare its findings and coordinate its press releases with the 88 Generation Students, who are organizing their own election monitoring effort (reftel).

¶6. (C) Emboffs offered to include Aye Tun's volunteers in the election monitoring training Dr. Eric Stover from the UC Berkeley Human Rights Center would conduct before the May 10 referendum. Aye Tun admitted the NLD desperately needed the training and said he would put together a list of those for whom it would be most useful and those who would be best placed to train others before referendum day.

¶7. (C) Comment: With its best organizers and activists

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imprisoned, the NLD is struggling to meet the challenge of monitoring the referendum. We doubt anyone will be able to obtain accurate vote tallies; the regime will do everything possible to guard the actual results so that it can announce whatever outcome it pleases. Monitoring efforts, however poorly coordinated, can offer more evidence of the Than Shwe regime's flouting of international electoral standards. End comment.

VILLAROSA